

BAPTIST FELLOWSHIPS WARN OF PROMISE KEEPERS MOVEMENT

Updated July 18, 1997 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

The term "independent fundamental Baptist church" refers not to a denomination but to a type of church. These churches are Baptist in doctrine and polity. They are independent in relation to other churches, meaning there is no denominational or ecclesiastical headquarters which has authority over these churches; each church is autonomous under its one Head Jesus Christ. They are also fundamentalist in their stand for Bible truth, meaning they are militant in their zeal for Bible doctrine and they practice ecclesiastical separation. There are an estimated 10,000 independent Baptist churches in the United States, and these churches support approximately 6,000 missionaries.

Though independent Baptists do not believe in denominational structures which influence or control the assemblies, they do believe in fellowship, and they associate and work together in various ways for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Two loosely knit fellowships of independent Baptist preachers and churches are the Southwide Baptist Fellowship (SBF) and the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship (FBF). Southwide was formed in 1956 at a meeting held in Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship of America can trace its roots back to 1920, but its present form began in 1967.

The Southwide Baptist Fellowship and the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship both passed resolutions this year warning of the Promise Keepers movement.

"Whereas the para-church organization known as 'Promise Keepers' advocates an unscriptural religious unity at the expense of sound doctrine and practice, accepts and promotes unscriptural charismatic teachings and the inclusion of Roman Catholicism, approves and uses psychological approaches that mix truth and error, uses unholy music and highly questionable speakers, and whereas they are aggressive in the pursuit of new members, a definite threat to Bible-believing Baptist churches who hold to doctrinal purity; therefore, be it resolved that the Southwide Baptist Fellowship stands firmly against it and its ecumenical bent" (Southwide Baptist Fellowship, meeting at Trinity Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, October 7-9, 1996).

"The FBF continues to oppose the burgeoning movement known as Promise Keepers, seeing in this 'grassroots ecumenism' one of the gravest dangers to the cause of true Biblical separation in this generation. A recent example of this ecumenism occurred at the 1996 Clergy Conference for Men held in Atlanta, Georgia, February 13-15, where Bill McCartney, leader of Promise Keepers, said, 'It is exciting to see the denominational barriers come down as we have Protestants and Roman Catholics together. The purpose of this meeting is to have the unity of the church.' While giving lip service to Jesus Christ, Promise Keepers, in its attempt to break down denominational walls, sends out a confusing message concerning doctrinal walls that God

sets up in His Word as essential to Biblical Christianity" (Fundamental Baptist Fellowship, meeting at Bethel Baptist Church, Schaumburg, Illinois, June 11-13, 1996).

Though not as strictly independent as the aforementioned churches, another association of Baptists which has taken a public stand against Promise Keepers is the General Association of Regular Baptists. The following resolution was passed at its annual meeting, Jun 21-25, 1997 --

"We express our opposition to the inclusive character of Promise Keepers, which minimizes doctrine and denominational distinctions in an attempt to achieve unity and fellowship. We voice our concern over the practice of using some speakers who are identified with denominations that are apostate or charismatic" (General Association of Regular Baptists, June 25, 1997).